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Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 MCT-01 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00
INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 ICA-11 SP-02 PC-01 AID-05
L-03 H-01 /064 W
----------112255 252030Z /15
R 251020Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8591
INFO AMCONSUL IBADAN
AMCONSUL KADUNA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, NI
SUBJECT: STUDENTS: THE SITUATION BECOMES TENSE AGAIN

REF: LAGOS 6283

1. SUMMARY: THE STUDENT BOYCOTT HAS CONTINUED WITH THE REOPENING OF NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES AND THE SITUATION APPEARS TENSE, AS IT WAS PRIOR TO THE OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE IN APRIL. STUDENT LEADERS REMAIN UNDER DETENTION AND THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE STUDENT ORGANIZATION HAS ISSUED A THREATENING STATEMENT: STUDENT LAWYER FAWEHINMI IS FREE ON BAIL AND HEARINGS CONTINUE IN HIS CASE. GIVEN THE REPORTEDLY TENSE SITUATION ON SOME CAMPUSES. THE POSSIBILITY OF SOME VIOLENCE CANNOT BE EXCLUSDED; HOWEVER, WHETHER THER WILL BE ANOTHER MAJOR STUDENT/GOVERNMENT CONFRONTATION IS OPEN TO QUESTION. END SUMMARY.

2. NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES HAVE REOPENED, BUT THE STUDENT BOYCOTTS CONTINUE. REPORTS FROM
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LAGOS AND OTHER CAMPUSES INCLUDING ILORIN, IFE AND IBADAN SUGGEST THE SITUATION IS QUITE TENSE, SIMILAR TOTHE PERIOD IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO OUTBREAKS OF VILENCE I APRIL. A KEY DIFFERENCE THIS TIME, HOWEVER, IS THE MORE PUBLIC PRESENCE OF STUDENTS WHO DO NOT SUPPORT THE BOYCOTT. THE PRESIDENT OF THE STUDENT'S

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UNION AT THE KONGO CAMPUS OF AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY IN ZARIA ANNOUNCED THAT STUDENTS ON THAT CAMPUS ARE RETURNING TO CLASSES, THAT THEY "CATEGORICALLY SEVER" TIES WITH THE STUDENTS' UNION ON THE MAIN CAMPUS AND THAT "WE ARE NOT A PARTY TO FORMATION" OF THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF NIGERIAN STUDENTS (NONS) WHICH HAS TAKEN OVER STUDENT LEADERSHIP FROM THE BANNED NATIONAL UNION OF NIGERIAN STUDENTS (NUNS). THE NIGERIAN CHRONICLE REPORTED THAT STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALABAR VOTED 584 TO 291 IN FAVOR OF RETURNING TO CLASSES, BUT THAT SOME STUDENTS WERE USING "MUSCLES" TO PREVENT STUDENTS FROM RETURNING.

3. THE MAY 23 NIGERIAN TRIBUNE REPORTED THAT ON SUNDAY MAY 21 FEMI OLUFAGBA, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE NONS RELEASED A STATEMENT DEMANDING THAT ALL DETAINED STUDENTS BE FREED BY MAY 30 AND STATING, "NIGERIAN STUDENTS RESERVE THE RIGHT TO TAKE SECURITY MEASURES NOT ONLY TO PROTECT THEIR LIVES AND THOSE OF OTHER NIGERIAN STUDENTS BEING MASSACRED BY OUR ARMED FORCES, BUT ALSO TO LIBERATE OUR FREEDOM FIGHTERS IN POLICE DETENTION." HE ALSO REITERATED THE BOYCOTT OF CLASSES SAYING THAT "REPORTS OF LECTURES GOING ON IN SOME UNI-
VERSITIES ARE UNFOUNDED AND A DIVERSIONARY TACTIC
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AIMED AT DIVIDING NIGERIAN STUDENTS." HE SAID THAT NIGERIAN STUDENTS HAD WEIGHED THE IMPLICATIONS AND COMPLICATIONS OF "OUR JUST CRUSADE AND WE ARE RESOLVED NOT TO ENTER INTO ANY REACTIONARY COMPROMISE WITH ANYBODY."

4. AFTER COURTROOM MANUVERING, STUDENT LAWYER CHIEF GANI FAWEHINMIS WAS RELEASED ON BAIL AND PROMPTLY REARRESTED BY POLICE. AS A SWELL OF PROTEST BEGAN TO EMERGE FROM VARIOUS CIRCLES, INCLUDING LAWYERS, HE WAS RELEASED AND HEARINGS NOW COONTINUE ON THE CHARGES AGAINST HIM.

5. IN THE SEARCH FOR SCAPEGOATS IN THE CURRENT CRISIS RUMORS HAVE CIRCULATED THAT SOUTH AFRICAN AGITATORS WERE INVOLVED. THIS ALLEGATION HAS APPARENTLY GAINED SOME CURRENCY SINCE THE DAILY STAR MAY 20 REPORTED THAT CHUDI UWAZURIKE, PRESIDENT OF THE NSUKKA STUDENTS UNON HAD DENIED SOUTH AFRICAN INVOLVEMENT AND DESCRIBED THE REPORT AS POLITICAL RPOPAGANDA.

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6. COMMENT: THE STUDENT CRISIS APPEARS TO BE BUILDING AGAIN WITH MAY 30 POSSIBLY THE KEY DATE. AT THE SAME TIME STUDENT OPPOSITION TO THE BOYCOTT IS MORE PROMINENT THATN IN APRIL. WHETHER OR NOT THERE WILL IN FACT BE ANOTHER CONFRONTATION IS OPEN TO QUESTIION. GIVEN THE REPOREDLY TENSE SITUATION ON SOME CAMPUSES VIOLENCE CANNOT BE EXCLUDED. WE ALSO NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT THE FMG HAS NOT YET TAKEN ANY OVERT ACTIONS AIMED AT THE STUDENTS AND APPARENTLY HOPESTHE CONTINUED DETENTION OF STUDENT LEADERS WILL KEEP THE SITUATION CALM.
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